

Yuma, Arizona

After a lengthy flight from Washington with Homeland Security Secretary Chertoff and the four-star chief of the U.S. Border Patrol, David Aguilar, we arrived at the Yuma Airport around noon local time. We were greeted by an eclectic delegation of Senators and Congressmen representing the full range of opinion on immigration reform.

Our small congressional group headed south to the U.S./Mexico border where dozens of miles of fencing have been constructed since the passage of the Border Fence Act last fall. In San Luis, an area that just last year was the site of frequent "banzai runs" where hundreds of illegals would simultaneously sprint across an antiquated fence of corrugated steel, now there stands miles of double fencing, 20 feet high, reinforced with ground sensors, cameras and patrols.

Two years ago, 138,000 illegals were arrested in this area. With the advent of the fencing and additional agents, that number was reduced to 118,000 arrests last year. Since October, only 15,000 illegals have been apprehended attempting border incursions. If current trends hold, the Yuma Sector will see a drop of 66 percent in the number of arrests this year. Overall, since the beginning of Operation Jump Start in June of 2006, the National Guard and Border Patrol have constructed 240 miles of fencing and physical barriers. That is progress.

Despite widespread public skepticism about this government's commitment to border control, the wall is going up and the number of illegals crossing the border is going down.

Special credit belongs to the Army National Guard deployed as part of Operation Jump Start. U.S. border patrol officials on our tour went to great pains to describe how essential the Guard had been to the rapid deployment of the border fence.

Mike Pence